

# Pragmatism as a Theory of Truth

by Guy Robert Duer

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GUY R. DUER

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, LAWRENCE

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## PRAGMATISM AS A THEORY OF TRUTH.

Pragmatism is a recent movement in philosophy in the field of epistemology, that has attracted world-wide attention. It is my purpose in this paper; first, to give an historical sketch of pragmatism, the development of the movement; second, to give a statement of what the movement is; third, to consider the criticism brought against it; fourth and in conclusion, to give a critical estimate of the permanent elements in pragmatism.

In the January number of the Popular Science Monthly, 1878, there appeared an article entitled, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", by C. S. Peirce. In this article Mr. Peirce held that the production of belief is the sole function of thought, that these beliefs are habits or rules of action, and that our idea of anything consists in its sensible effects upon us. I shall now give a brief summary of the main points in the paper, since it is important for our purpose, being the seed from which the present modern movement called pragmatism was destined to spring.

First then, the sole function of thought is the production of belief; and belief involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action or habit. These rules depend upon the data that we get from the effect of things upon us. Once established, a belief serves as a new starting place for further thought; and thus our system of

beliefs is built up to act as guide to us and to shape our future conduct. There are often many distinctions, that are only imaginary, drawn between beliefs. They may result from the inaccuracy of language; i. e., two persons may have different ideas corresponding to the same word, and in using this word one will mean one thing, while the other will mean something slightly different. Thus confusion results. Locke spent the whole of Book III of the Essay Concerning the Human Understanding in presenting this same truth. Mr. Peirce recognizes the same difficulty, and devotes most of his paper to clearing it up, in showing what we mean by an idea and how to make our ideas clear.

Secondly then, what is the meaning of a given idea? Merely this, its effects upon us. What do we mean by wine? Merely that which has certain effects, either direct or indirect upon our senses. Our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects, and we are deceiving ourselves if we think we have anything else. It is impossible to have an idea in our minds which relates to anything but conceived sensible effects of things. By calling a thing 'hard' we mean that it cannot be scratched by many other substances. Here again the conception of the quality - in this case, hardness - lies in its conceived effects. Weight may be considered in the same way. By calling a thing heavy we mean that in case it is not supported and there is no opposing force, it will fall. This is what we mean by weight, and nothing more. Illustrations

tions might be multiplied 'ad infinitum', but these will suffice. In general then, "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."<sup>1</sup> A thing is judged to be this or that according to what it does, what difference it makes in a certain way, in short, by its effects.

We see readily that the above has a direct bearing on the problem of truth. There is great need to inspect our ideas in the above fashion before setting out on a search for knowledge. We must know what we mean by given ideas. What meaning, what sense is there in considering the question of the reality of things that produce no effect upon us? Such a consideration would be mere speculation, comparable to a fairy story, and having no place in a system of truth. Especially in the field of metaphysics must we take care not to make such a mistake. It has happened there too often already.

This, then, is the "principle of Peirce, the principle of pragmatism",<sup>2</sup> according to Professor James. It did not, however, create any interest or stir up any discussion in the philosophical world at the time of its appearance. It lay unnoticed until 1898 when Professor James in an address before the Philosophical Union at the University of California

1. Pop.Sci.Mon., Vol. XII, p293.

2. Pragmatism, p47.

discussed it, made a special application of it to religion, and launched the movement of pragmatism which has occupied a large place in philosophic thinking up to the present time. The movement is by no means limited to our own country, although its leader, Professor James, is among our number. It is represented by Mr. Schiller and others in England, by Mr. Papini and others on the continent. In short it is a world-wide movement in philosophy. It has been discussed everywhere in philosophical circles, and all the philosophical publications have been crowded with articles concerning it, sometimes considering it favorably, but very often unfavorably.

As the movement spread there were three men who might be considered the leaders. These were Messrs. James, Schiller, and Dewey. Professor James came out with what seemed to everyone a new criterion of truth. The working of an idea constitutes its truth. That is true which is useful, which works. Truth depends upon consequences. "There can be no difference which doesn't make a difference."<sup>1</sup> The truth of an idea consists in its verification. You may say, "'it is useful because it is true', or 'it is true because it is useful'. Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified."<sup>2</sup> This is a rather bald statement of the criterion

1. Pragmatism, p49.

2. " P204,



of truth which Professor James defends. It will, however, be developed and explained further in the second part of this paper.

Professor James does not claim originality in pragmatism except in so far as he has unified tendencies already existing. In fact I think he is somewhat too modest and takes to himself too little credit for his own contribution. He gives Mr. Peirce credit for the 'principle of pragmatism.'<sup>1</sup> When the movement began to spread, however, and became stated in definite terms, Mr. Peirce could not recognize his own contribution in it. At least he felt that his pragmatism was not that of Professor James, for he suggested that his be called 'pragmaticism'.<sup>2</sup> In reading his article, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", it is hard to tell whether he meant to include all that pragmatism now stands for or not. It is very easy to read into his article certain points which pragmatism now emphasizes; yet they are not definitely stated, and it is doubtful whether Mr. Peirce meant to state them.

However, Mr. Schiller writes, "Mr. Peirce has privately assured me that from the first he has perceived the full consequences of his dictum. Hence the formulation of the whole pragmatic principle must be ascribed to him. He now, however, calls his specific developments of Pragmatism, 'pragmaticism'!"<sup>3</sup>

1. Pragmatism, p47.

2. What Pragmatism Is. Monist, Vol. XV, 21.

3. Studies in Humanism, p5.

However this may be, it seems to me that Professor James came as near formulating the principle of pragmatism in his earlier works, e. g., *The Sentiment of Rationality* and other essays, as Mr. Peirce did. But the question of priority does not trouble Professor James at all. He holds that there is nothing new in pragmatism. His recent book is entitled, "Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking." In it he says, "There is absolutely nothing new in the pragmatic method. Socrates was an adept at it. Aristotle used it methodically. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume made momentous contributions to truth by its means. Shadworth Hodgson keeps insisting that realities are only what they are 'known as'. But these forerunners of pragmatism used it in fragments: they were a prelude only. Not until our time has it generalized itself, become conscious of a universal mission, pretended to a conquering destiny."<sup>1</sup>

Again in the same chapter, "It is evident that the term applies itself conveniently to a number of tendencies that hitherto have lacked a collective name, and that it has 'come to stay.'"<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Schiller, the leader of the movement in England, has agreed with Professor James throughout in the development of pragmatism. He has, however, emphasized a different phase of the movement, and has called his contribution human-

1. *Pragmatism*, p50.

2. " p47.

ism. "Human interest ..... is vital to the existence of truth: to say that a truth has consequences and what has none is meaningless, means that it has a bearing on some human interest. Its consequences must be consequences to some one for some purpose."<sup>1</sup>

Interests, emotions, volitions, and aspirations, have to be considered in this problem. Truths are man-made; they are not transcendental, absolute affairs. They are our own systematization of the data we get from experience. Human desires, motives, etc., determine largely what this system of truths is to be. This position is not subjectivism, as it has been accused of being. It recognizes resisting factors in our experience, but it holds that we cannot separate out such factors from the human contribution.

Mr. Dewey's name has usually been connected with the 'instrumental' view of truth. Ideas are true in so far as they help us to systematize our experience. He attacked the problem from the genetic standpoint, and his "Studies in Logical Theory" had a great influence in the early statement of pragmatism. In the main his position seemed to agree entirely with that of Messrs. James and Schiller. Recently,<sup>2</sup> however, he has announced certain points of difference, and these will be considered in the third part of this paper.

1. Studies in Humanism, p5.

2. Journal of Philosophy, Vol. V, 4.

## II.

We shall now proceed to a more detailed statement and explanation of what pragmatism is. First, it is a theory of truth and an outgrowth of the empirical school, though not a statement of empiricism as we shall see later. It is largely the method of modern science extended and applied to all fields of inquiry. There is no reason why there should be different methods and different tests for truth in the different fields. In all of them, science, philosophy, religion, or what-not, men are in search of knowledge. The pragmatists then suggest a single criterion of truth in all of these fields, viz., the workability of the idea in question.

Ostwald, the great German chemist and philosopher, in his correspondence with Professor James wrote, "All realities influence our practice, and that influence is their meaning for us. I am accustomed to put questions to my classes in this way: In what respects would the world be different if this alternative or that were true? If I can find nothing that would become different, then the alternative has no sense."<sup>1</sup> In other words, one alternative would mean the same as the other, since there would be no difference accruing from either this or that ones being true.

Again Ostwald in speaking of a controversy among chemists concerning the inner constitution of bodies called

1. Pragmatism, p48.

tautomerous says, "It would never have begun if the combatants had asked themselves what particular experimental fact could have been made different by one or the other view being correct. For it would then have appeared that no difference of fact could possibly ensue; and the quarrel was as unreal as if, theorizing in primitive times about the raising of dough by yeast, one party should have invoked a 'brownie', while another insisted on an 'elf' as the true cause of the phenomenon."<sup>1</sup>

In the Principles of Psychology,<sup>2</sup> by Professor James appears the following passage which is decidedly pragmatic, though written long before the pragmatic movement, strictly so-called, had begun: "What we experience, what comes before us, is a chaos of fragmentary impressions interrupting each other; what we think is an abstract system of hypothetical data and laws. This sort of scientific algebra, little as it immediately resembles the reality given to us, turns out (strangely enough) applicable to it. That is, it yields expressions which, at given places and times, can be translated into real values, or interpreted as definite portions of the chaos that falls upon our sense. It becomes thus a practical guide to our expectations as well as a theoretic delight. But I do not see how anyone with a sense for the facts can possibly call our systems immediate results

1. Pragmatism, p49.

2. p634.



of 'experience' in the ordinary sense. Every scientific conception is in the first instance a spontaneous variation in someone's brain. For one that proves useful and applicable there are a thousand that perish through their worthlessness. .... 'Scientific conceptions must prove their worth by being 'verified'. This test, however, is the cause of their preservation, not of their production."

Again, later in his "Pragmatism", "It is ... as if reality were made up of ether, atoms or electrons, but we mustn't think so literally. The term 'energy' doesn't even pretend to stand for anything 'objective'. It is only a way of measuring the surface of phenomena so as to string their changes on a simple formula."<sup>1</sup>

Theories in science are true only in so far as they meet and systematize the facts, the data that we have. This is what constitutes their truth. This is their meaning, and the only real meaning they can have. They are instruments, made by man from his data accumulated through his past experience, and their purpose is to serve man as a guide in his future experience. History has shown us that new data are constantly coming into view as the result of scientific research, etc., and these often force us either to abandon or remodel our theories, usually the latter. The Ptolemaic astronomy had to be given a thorough overhauling resulting

in the Copernican astronomy. Present day scientific theories are being modified and remodelled to account for the new data which comes to us day by day. Only a short time ago the advent of radium threatened to overturn our fundamental conception of the conservation of energy. Ramsay in fitting this new intruder into the old theories, however, saved the principle of conservation of energy, because it was so useful and fundamental in our other theories. However, he had to extend and reshape our old ideas of energy.

And so it is with all our theories. They are instrumental. They are not answers to puzzles. They are not final solutions, but they are our systematizations of past data to serve as guides and schedules for more work. We have no assurance that tomorrow will not bring us new data that will necessitate a reshaping of our theory. In the meantime it is true, for it serves to systematize all the data we have. Early in the history of science when men had just begun to formulate laws, they were so carried away by their clearness, their usefulness, etc., that they believed they had discovered something absolute. "But as science has developed farther," says Professor James, "the notion has gained ground that most, perhaps all of our laws are only approximations. The laws themselves, moreover, have grown so numerous that there is no counting them; and so many rival formulations are proposed in all branches of science that investigators have become accustomed to the notion that

no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality, but that any one of them may from some point of view be useful. Their great use is to summarize old facts and to lead to new ones. They are only a man-made language, as some one calls them, in which we write our reports of nature; and languages, as is well known, tolerate much choice of expression and many dialects.... Ideas (which themselves are but part of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience, to summarize them and get about among them by conceptual short-cuts instead of following the interminable succession of particular phenomena."<sup>1</sup>

And so when new data are presented to us, which necessitate a change in our old stock of truths, we make such changes as are absolutely necessary, but preserve the old truths with a minimum of modification. Loyalty, as far as it is possible, to old truth is one of the fundamental elements in the pragmatic temperament. If one is not thus loyal he is apt to cut himself off from past experience, and lose a great amount of valuable data. There would be no advantage to gain by cutting loose entirely from old theories. Instead there would be a decided disadvantage, and hence we are loath to part from our old theories which have served us so well in the past. The result is that we reshape them with

as little change as possible, just enough to include our new facts in the system. If two revisions of the theory have been made, and each meets the new data as well as the other, one is really as true as the other. But in science we always, under these conditions, choose the simpler of the two, and call it the true theory, not because it meets the new facts better, but because it is simpler, and it would be poor taste to choose the more complex.

It is not, however, a perfectly easy matter to find even one theory that will meet all the facts presented and not clash with other already accepted truths. Much less is it often possible to find two or more theories that meet the facts, that work equally well. It is true it sometimes happens, but it is by no means a common occurrence. To work means to mediate between all previous truths and the given new data which experience has brought us. Ordinarily that part of a proposed hypothesis that seems to work is allowed to survive and be tested farther, while the part that is useless is discarded. By this process of selection a suitable theory, one that works in fitting the new facts into the old truths is at last found.

In determining the truth or falsity of a conception then, we have to consider always, does it meet the facts, does it systematize the data we have received from experience, does it work? This is the test. Science adds another, less important but nevertheless a factor, is it the simplest theory

that will systematize the given data?

Truth is not merely a great number of facts, a great mass of data. These are not true, they simply are. They are the given only, and as such cannot be considered as truth. Truth is what we say about them; it is our reducing them to system. As Professor James puts it, "Truths emerge from facts; but they dip forward into facts again and add to them; which facts again create or reveal new truth (the word is indifferent) and so on indefinitely. The facts themselves meanwhile are not true. They simply are. Truth is the function of the beliefs that start and terminate among them."<sup>1</sup> Failure to grasp this point has been the cause of much of the misunderstanding in regard to pragmatism.

So much for the pragmatist criterion in the field of science. But it is not limited to science. Pragmatism recommends it as a universal and the only criterion of truth, applicable to any and every field of inquiry. It recommends it to philosophy, and holds that science and philosophy should not be separated by so wide a gap as they now are. Scientific truth and philosophic truth are not such entirely different varieties that they require separate criteria. Hence, pragmatism revolts against mere speculation in philosophy, against those abstract metaphysical systems which make no difference to our world of experience, which have no

1. Pragmatism, p225.



bearing whatever upon our data and do not serve to systematize or explain them, which are in short useless from every point of view unless perhaps it be to serve as a sort of mental gymnastics. In settling philosophical disputes one must apply the same test that he applies in settling disputes concerning scientific theories. What difference will accrue from this or that alternative being true?

"It is astonishing to see how many philosophical disputes collapse into insignificance the moment you subject them to this simple test of tracing a concrete consequence. There can be no difference anywhere that doesn't make a difference elsewhere - no difference in abstract truth that doesn't express itself in a difference of concrete fact and in conduct subsequent upon that fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, somewhen. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one."<sup>1</sup>

In the field of metaphysics in the past, philosophers have been too prone to spin out their systems without enough attention to the given data. They have often refused to be hampered by such data. The result may be a very beautiful system, but it is very doubtful whether it has any right to the name of truth. Too often have the solutions of the metaphysical problems been merely verbal solutions.

Pragmatism proposes to improve these conditions, and raise philosophy to a higher place by applying its criterion of truth to philosophical problems.

We have already seen in the above the humanistic tinge in the pragmatist's theory of truth. Truth is not an absolute and final something. Truth is a human institution. Truth in any given field of inquiry is merely our own abstractions from the facts about us, from the data given. It is merely a useful summarizing phrase. What our abstractions are to be is determined largely by our own temperament, by our own motives, our satisfactions, our desires, etc. We are reminded of this every day. Men are different in temperament, and with this difference we find another and corresponding difference in their respective stocks of truths. Which is the truer? The rationalist will say we must ignore these factors. The pragmatist, however, holds that the reason we have so much disagreement and so many quarrels about the truth of this or that proposition, is because we have heretofore ignored these factors. The only way to settle these differences and clear up the situation is to recognize temperament, the human element, and allow it to account for so much. It is a real factor, and must be considered.

Truth depends upon purpose. As Mr. Schiller insists, "The most essential feature of pragmatism may well seem its insistence upon the fact that all mental life is purposive."<sup>1</sup>

1. Studies in Humanism, p10.

In every human situation there is a purpose, and truth has reference to the fulfillment of this purpose. Hence, as the purposes of individuals differ, so will their truth contribution. Our beliefs, in whatever line, are hypotheses to be tested by the on-going of future experience. They are all analogous to scientific hypotheses. All are founded on faith based largely on what we desire. They are all tested alike by their consequences, by whether they serve us for the purpose intended or not.

The human element then has a place in the consideration of the problem of truth. Mr. Schiller in his enthusiasm almost seems to think it deserves the whole place. He does, however, recognize resisting factors. We may conclude from the above that there is a certain sense in which we human individuals make reality. This sounds very queer at first, and it has brought floods of criticism upon the pragmatists. They do not, however, hold that we are the sole constructors of reality. We only cooperate in the making. There are resisting factors. These are given us in our experience data, and we have not the power to alter them to suit our taste. But we do have power to put these data into shape, to systematize them. This is what we do; and the finished product, truth, a human construction, is used as a guide for us in future experience, making this experience different from what it would have been without such a guide. This is what the pragmatists mean by our making reality, and

this is all they mean. It is absurd to try to read into their doctrine the fact that we can rule out all resisting factors and change our sense experience to something other than what it is by some sort of magic. Yet this is what some of their critics seem to be trying to do.

It has perhaps already been surmized what the pragmatist's attitude toward what has been called a priori truths, toward axioms and our stock of universally accepted truths will be. These appear more certain or truer simply because they have been more useful to us in systematizing our experience. But even they are not final. We feel like considering them so merely because they have worked so well. We have never known them to fail us. They served our ancestors equally well, and in fact were handed down to us by them. We feel confident that there can never be a break, that these truths are a priori and certain, and that they will never fail us, merely because they never have failed us in the past. We forget to consider their source. We ignore the fact that they too in the last resort are human generalizations or our own presuppositions, dependent upon the given in experience. They have been handed down from generation to generation for ages past, and we have no record of course of their first appearance. We only know that they have survived, and that has been possible only because they have been of use to us. We needed them, and there was nothing else available that would serve the purpose

better. We have no assurance, however, that tomorrow may not bring us new experience data that will compel us to modify even these fundamental conceptions of ours. I cited above a case in which our conception of the conservation of energy was seriously threatened by the appearance of radium.

Our conceptions must be made to fit our data, not our data to fit conceptions. In case of new data, however, we always alter the old conception as little as possible. Thus the development of these fundamental conceptions is slow enough to be almost imperceptible, and we feel more like bowing down before them than criticizing them. They are the results of a great evolutionary movement in which they have survived because of their usefulness in meeting the facts, while millions of other conceptions have disappeared because they were less useful and efficient in meeting the facts of experience.

Professor James calls these fundamental ways of thinking of ours and this stock of - let us say petrified truths, 'common sense', using the term of course in a technical sense. "Our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time.....

"When we look back, and speculate how the common-sense categories may have achieved their wonderful supremacy, no reason appears why it may not have been by a process

just like that by which the conceptions due to Democritus, Berkeley, or Darwin, achieved their similar triumphs in more recent times. In other words they may have been successfully discovered by prehistoric geniuses whose names the night of antiquity has covered up; they may have been verified by the immediate facts of experience which they first fitted; and then from fact to fact and from man to man they may have spread, until all language rested on them and we are now incapable of thinking in any other terms. Such a view would only follow the rule that has proved elsewhere so fertile, of assuming the vast and remote to conform to the laws of formation that we can observe at work in the small and near."<sup>1</sup>

The pragmatist has a very definite quarrel, we see, with the rationalist on these points. He would hold that a priori truths are not certain. They have to run the same gauntlet and face the same test that other truths do. They are not a class of truths separate and distinct from other truths. They are merely assumptions, postulates, presuppositions, with which we begin to build up our system of truths, and they too must be subjected to the pragmatic test.

May not the rationalist have taken too much as a priori? And if so, why should we take anything as a priori,

as a closed question? Truths seem more and more self-evident the more we use them, the more we become acquainted with them. Acquaintance breeds assurance of their truth, and makes us consider them absolute and final, makes us place them on the infallible list. Experience shows us this every day. But where shall we draw the line? The pragmatist says there can be no line. Perhaps the data from experience are not all in yet. Indeed, we have every reason to believe they are not. With its addition even our most absolute and sacred formulas may have to be altered. We have no assurance as to what data tomorrow may bring us. Hence the rationalist must not be too sure about the absolute character of his truths. His statement concerning them should be hypothetical - if the data are all in, this conclusion is certain on the basis that the postulates, which we must make at the beginning, hold. But if some new fact appears and upsets our system, we must make enough alteration in it to include this new fact. Truths cannot be final. Systems cannot be closed, for we have no absolute assurance that the future has not in store for us something that may necessitate an alteration in our system. Hence, our systems must remain open for all time.

The universality of law in nature is a conception that has a place in everybody's stock of truths. Science would be helpless without it. In fact prediction would be absolutely impossible without it. Yet it is not such an



absolute truth as some of us would like to consider it. It is a human generalization based upon human experience. The pragmatist considers it as merely an assumption, a postulate, upon which our knowledge of the world about us depends. We find a great deal of uniformity in the phenomena about us. We also find very often a seeming lack of uniformity. We then set about to account for this discrepancy, and to prove our hypothesis by finding some other factor that has operated to upset things. Thus we must be continually defending our hypothesis that nature is uniform. In fact nature may be only approximately uniform. Some uniformity we know there is, but the proposition that nature is uniform is a generalization based upon probability. When we take this fundamental truth down from its pedestal, we must also take down all those that are dependent upon it. They are all true just in so far as they work and are useful in reducing our data to a system and preparing us to meet the future.

This is the pragmatist's attitude toward a priori truths, axioms, and that large body of universally accepted truths which include all our fundamental ways of thinking. Having had great survival value, they have outlived their less fortunate brother conceptions, and have come down to us as the heritage of our forefathers. They have become petrified, and we are apt to set them off in a class by themselves as absolute and infallible and ignore their real

nature and origin. For a fuller and completer statement and a defense of this position, I refer the reader to Mr. Schiller's "Axioms as Postulates" and "Humanism", and Professor James' chapters on 'Common Sense' and 'Humanism' in "Pragmatism".

It is fairly clear now what the pragmatist's conception of truth is. But before passing on to the next part, the criticism that the movement has brought upon itself, let us make a final effort to clear up the situation and make sure that we know definitely what pragmatism is.

Truth has long since been defined as agreement with reality. Everyone accepts this definition, the pragmatist included. But the controversy comes in in determining what we mean by this 'agreement' and 'reality'. The pragmatist holds that he has given the only tenable account of what such agreement is. I shall here quote freely from Professor James as he is the leader of the movement and ought to be able to speak with authority concerning it, if anyone can.

"Realities mean .... either concrete facts, or abstract kinds of thing<sup>and relations</sup> perceived intuitively between them. They furthermore and thirdly mean, as things that new ideas of ours must no less take account of, the whole body of other truths already in our possession. But now what does agreement with such threefold realities mean?....

"To agree in the widest sense with a reality

can only mean to be guided straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed. Better either intellectually or practically! And often agreement will only mean the negative fact that nothing contradictory from the quarter of that reality comes to interfere with the way in which our ideas guide us elsewhere. To copy a reality is indeed one very important way of agreeing with it, but it is far from being essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided. Any idea that helps us to deal, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn't entangle our progress with frustrations, that fits, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's whole setting, will agree sufficiently to meet the requirement. It will hold true of that reality.....

"Agreement thus turns out to be essentially an affair of leading - leading that is useful because it is into quarters that contain objects that are important. True ideas lead us into useful verbal and conceptual quarters as well as directly up to useful sensible termini. They lead to consistency, stability, and flowing human intercourse. They lead away from excentricity and isolation, from foiled and barren thinking. The untrammelled flowing of the leading process, its general freedom from clash and contradiction, passes for its indirect verification; but all roads

lead to Rome, and in the end and eventually, all true processes must lead to the face of directly verifying sensible experiences somewhere, which somebody's ideas have copied."<sup>1</sup>

Although the purpose of all the above has been to define truth, it may be well to quote here some concise phrases and definitions of truth from the pragmatic standpoint. "The true, to put it briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight wont necessarily meet all farther experience equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over, and making us correct our present formulas. The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will someday converge."<sup>2</sup>

Again, "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not. .... Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an e-

1. Pragmatism, pp212-215.

2. " p222.

vent, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri- fication. Its validity is the process of its valid-ation. But what do the words verification and validation themselves pragmatically mean? They again signify certain practical consequences of the verified and validated idea."<sup>1</sup>

We may say then, that truth is "a collective name for verification processes"<sup>2</sup>, and to work perfectly and completely is verification. You are not permitted, however, to limit truth to what you yourself have verified. Not only verification but also verifiability is to be the test. Truth is social in character, and a great part of our truths have not been verified by us directly. We accept some one else's verification, and put them on our list. We use them, and find that they are entirely satisfactory. They work for us in so far as we need them; but we have only indirect verification of them; we have only verifiability. We could put them through all the tests if we so desired, but we do not.

Science is doing this continually. The whole field of investigation is divided off into sections; e.g., chemistry, physics, zoology, geology, etc. They have inaugurated here as well as in the industrial field the scheme of the division of labor. The chemist stays in his own

1. Pragmatism, p201.

2. " p218.

corner, and limits his verification processes to that field. So with the physicist, zoologist, geologist, etc., and each one accepts the verification processes of the other. Thus very many of our stock of truths have not been directly verified by us. We trade on each others' truths. But each one of them in the last analysis has been verified by some one, and it is upon such direct verifications that truth rests.

The scope of pragmatism is "first a method; and second, a genetic theory of what is meant by truth."<sup>1</sup> It is not a philosophy, and it stands for no particular results. There are many who seem to be willing to accept pragmatism as method, but who balk at the theory of truth. Scientists generally agree that there must be a difference in fact to make it allowable to change a theory. They agree that a thing is judged by us entirely by its effects upon us. "We will use your methods," they say, "in our search for truth. Your criteria of usefulness, workability, etc., will help us in the direction of truth, but they are not themselves truth." Hence they very often balk when the pragmatist suggests that the truth of a given idea consists in its workability. They seem to prefer the rationalist's position. But as we have seen above the pragmatist holds that you cannot separate the method and theory of truth. Its being a

1. Pragmatism, p65.

method is incidental to its being a theory of truth, and is included in it.

As we have noted above, pragmatism stands for no particular results. It has no such materialistic bias such as empiricism has. It is not unfriendly to abstractions as long as they work and are of use to us in getting about among particulars. Whenever they fail to do this, however, they must be cast out. In fact pragmatism considers any conception whatever as true, from whatever source it may have originated, as long as it meets the pragmatic criterion. Professor James recommends it as a mediator between the 'two extreme temperaments in philosophy, the 'tough-minded' and the 'tender-minded', as he calls them, or the empiricist and the rationalistic.

In the field of religion, "If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true for pragmatism in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely upon their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged."<sup>1</sup>

Professor James even goes so far as to suggest that the Absolute is true in so far as it meets the pragmatic criterion. But we must be very sure that we understand what we mean by calling these conceptions true. The absolute idealist means a very different thing from what the



pragmatist does when he makes the assertion, and the pragmatist has a definite quarrel with him on this very point. But as this difference has already been noted, we shall not discuss it farther here.

### III.

Before pragmatism had been fairly stated, the critics were out in full force, prepared to strike a death blow at the new movement at the first opportunity. It is always so. The critic like the warrior seems to have a thirst for spoils; he wants to tear something down; and too often he criticizes without having, and seemingly without attempting to get, even a fair understanding of the object of his criticism. His criticism then is unintelligent, and he is in fact criticizing nothing but a figment of his own imagination. So it has been with a large number of the critics of pragmatism. They failed to get a true conception of the movement before beginning their attack.

There is bound to be a certain amount of such unintelligent criticism in every case, but pragmatism for some reason or other seemed to get a double portion. By this time things are clearing up considerably, however, and we are getting some of the more valuable sort, intelligent criticism, that is, that in which the critic knows what he is criticizing. Yet there are some who insist on

misunderstanding and in putting their own interpretation on the pragmatic criterion, even after they have been definitely informed that pragmatism stands for nothing of the sort. Because of this fact Professor James, toward whom most of the attacks are directed, has been kept busy up to the present time stating what he meant.

But let us take care that we do not in our turn give the critic an unjust condemnation. It is true that the philosophical periodicals were crowded with much criticism that appears as mere stuff, and ridiculous in the light of a full and complete statement of pragmatism, which, however, the critics did not have at hand when they wrote. Perhaps it was possible only through these criticisms to get an accurate statement. There is much to be said on either side. And in defense of the critics one may say that the first statements of pragmatism were rather vague and in many places capable of a double interpretation. It is impossible that it should be otherwise in the case of a movement having such wide significance; and it would be no discredit to the leader if he should later make certain modifications which he deemed necessary. Conceptions of this sort do not spring up in a moment complete and accurately stated. However, Professor James claims not to have changed his position in the least, and in the last resort we must of course go to him to find what he meant by certain passages in the early statement.

In view of this we must conclude that the misunderstandings were due, first to the fact that it was new to some - they were not in the habit of considering things in that light, and to do so required a readjustment; second, the statements were to some extent really ambiguous, perhaps due to the fact that they were given by Professor James as popular lectures and the fact that there was a lack of technical terms in their expression. Such terms as 'useful', 'practical', 'working', etc., were not definite enough to express what was really meant. In many places they could be interpreted in a way which the author never intended. 'Practical' has a host of meanings and shades of meaning, and it is safe to say that it was given every interpretation possible by some critic or other.

One group of critics insisted that pragmatism meant 'practicalism', since the word pragmatism is derived from the Greek word  $\pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\alpha$  meaning action, and being the source from which our terms 'practice' and 'practical' are derived. They then proceeded to put their own interpretation on the word 'practical', and developed for themselves the following conception of pragmatism. It is a sort of make-shift philosophy for men of action generally, such as engineers, doctors, etc. But it is not a real and genuine philosophy. It will do in many cases for a substitute, but it is not the real thing. The 'practical' or 'useful' criterion of truth will serve as a test for truth in a great

many cases, but by no means in all. There are many truths that are absolutely impractical and useless to us. So if we want a rough test of truth, something which we can apply in a hurry, and something which in the majority of cases will serve our purpose, we shall find pragmatism helpful. If we want a real test, however, we must look elsewhere.

In the light of the preceding statement of pragmatism, such an interpretation appears ridiculous; and it was possible only through a very narrow interpretation of the terms 'practical' and 'useful'. The critics took these terms to mean nothing more than making money, getting possession of more property, and similar things, which is indeed the popular conception of practical. From the fact that Professor James used such terms as 'cash-value', 'credit system', and 'bank notes passing', they jumped to the conclusion that 'practical' and 'useful' meant just this and nothing more.

But when the pragmatist speaks of 'practical difference', he means any difference whatever. The term 'practical' might just as well have been omitted. The meaning would have been the same. In science there are many conceptions and theories that have been very useful (using the term in the narrow sense), while others have been useless and impractical (using the term in the same sense). But this has nothing to do with their truth and falsity. We must use the term in the broad sense - not merely useful

for accumulating wealth, for commercial or industrial purposes, but useful for the purpose of explaining all the data we have, for the purpose of reducing all experience data to a system, that we may be able to comprehend them and handle them better, that by means of such a system we may be guided in our future experience. Not only the difference that brings us an extra loaf of bread is to be considered, but every difference. There is no difference that isn't a practical difference, using the term 'practical' in the broad sense that the pragmatist does. And to speak of a difference that produces no effect upon us is folly, senseless, mere speculation with no foundation whatever. Thus pragmatism denies that it makes practical utility in the narrow sense a criterion of truth. The term must be used in a broad sense, and it is unfortunate that we have not another word for the idea to be expressed, a technical term that could not be given such different interpretations.

Pragmatism has further been accused of being merely a restatement of some variety of empiricism. Some of the critics have termed it a re-hash of positivism. Others have considered it as pure subjectivism with no balancing factor whatever. Thus the interpretations made by the critics have by no means agreed, and many of them will appear ridiculous and inapplicable in the light of the preceding statement of pragmatism. In fact they have already been met in this statement. The very fact that these criticisms

were before us has perhaps made it possible to give a clearer and more accurate statement than would otherwise have been possible. Hence, if the answers to some of these objections seem inadequate, the reader is referred to the preceding section for further evidence.

Pragmatism is not merely a re-hash of positivism. Positivism denies the possibility of knowledge of reality in itself. It recognizes many problems, which it considers insoluble, while pragmatism considers these same problems absurd and devoid of sense. The positivist's definition of truth is different from the pragmatist's definition, which has already been set forth. Pragmatism does not give up, lay down everything, and declare that we cannot attain to real truth, as positivism does. On the other hand, it defines what we mean by truth, as we have already seen. Neither does it insist that mere immediate facts are all we can know, as empiricism in its baldest form would assert. It welcomes abstractions from any source whatever, fanciful hypotheses of any sort, etc., so long as the facts fit into them, and they work in guiding us in our experience, every phase of which must be taken into consideration if it has any connection with or any bearing on the abstraction.

Thus pragmatism takes the good points of empiricism, the facts, the data, and also the good points of rationalism, those abstractions which have backing. These it unites in its own way, and produces a theory of truth that

is far more acceptable than that of either the extreme empiricist or the rationalist, since it has eliminated the objectional features of each. Pragmatism wants both facts and abstractions. It is very liberal, since it will take anything, so long as it fulfills the proposed criterion.

The charge of subjectivism too is a false one, and might as well have been directed toward the rationalist as the pragmatist. It resulted from the fact that the term 'satisfaction' was used in defining the pragmatic criterion of truth, and its meaning was misinterpreted. Satisfaction is in itself a subjective condition. Hence the critics drew the rash conclusion that whatever idea a person happened to fancy, no matter whether it was substantiated by sufficient data or not, or in fact whether there was any data whatever, - this idea would be true for him. Nothing is farther from the pragmatist's real attitude. The satisfaction in question is that which comes from a consideration of all the data in connection with the idea.

Professor James expressly denies that "whatever proves subjectively expedient in the way of our thinking is true in the absolute and unrestricted sense of the word, whether it corresponds to any objective state of things outside of our thought or not."<sup>1</sup>

He further asserts, "The object for me is just as

1. J. of Phil., Vol. V, p690.



much one part of reality as the idea is another part. The truth of an idea is one relation of it to the reality, just as its date and its place are other relations. All three relations consist of intervening parts of the universe which can in every particular case be assigned and catalogued, and which differ in every instance of truth, just as they differ with every date and place. The pragmatic thesis ... is that the relation called truth is thus concretely definable."<sup>2</sup>

It is possible to let our individual preferences, our respective temperaments, have full sway only when we have two rival conceptions or hypotheses, each of which meet the facts. In such a case, as has already been shown, one is as true as the other, and we are at liberty to choose the one that suits our taste. This happens, however, comparatively seldom, and is not the first consideration. First always, does it fit the data? This accusation involves the whole question of the place of temperament in the truth problem. As we have already treated it above, however, we shall not add more here.

Descartes might as well have been accused of such extreme subjectivism for laying down 'clearness and distinctness' as a criterion of the truth of ideas. Professor James uses the term 'luminousness' in his "Varieties of Religious

"Experience" to denote the same thing, and this would perhaps have been a better term, since it would be less apt to be given so many interpretations.

About a year ago there appeared in the Journal of Philosophy<sup>1</sup> a very interesting bit of analysis by Mr. Lovejoy. His article is entitled "The Thirteen Pragmatisms", and he claims to have singled out a dozen and one contentions which have been grouped together as pragmatism, but which are logically independent, so that you may with consistency accept any one of them and reject all the others. He divides them into three theories of meaning, nine theories of knowledge each proposing a criterion of the validity of a judgment, and one ontological theory, making thirteen in all. Upon examination, however, it is found that his analysis is not what he has claimed for it, but that it is a mixture. In part it is composed of an analysis of the elements of pragmatism; in part an enumeration of confused misconceptions of what the pragmatic criterion is.

The problem of truth cannot be considered without involving the problem of meaning, and pragmatism does not claim to be limited to meaning. It is a theory of truth. It states its criterion of truth, and then proceeds to explain in detail what it means by the criterion. If in this explanation there appear certain contentions that are con-

nected with the problem - and it is impossible that it should be otherwise - well and good, so long as they are necessary and are logically connected. But there is no reason why one of these should be considered the sum and substance of pragmatism. This is absurd. Nevertheless, as Mr. Lovejoy suggests, it is about time for pragmatism to be clearing up, for contemporary philosophers at least to understand what pragmatism is and to attach a single meaning to the term; and this analysis, though faulty in many ways, has assisted in this clearing-up process.

After all these matters have been cleared up, and everybody understands what pragmatism means and what its criterion of truth is, still there is a battle on. And it is between rationalism and pragmatism, each understanding the position of the other. This is the rationalist's attack. Pragmatism explains not what truth is, but only how it is arrived at. There is a distinction between the truth of an idea and the proof that it is true. An idea may be true and yet be beyond proof by our human experience. Mr. Russell in his controversy with Professor James<sup>1</sup>, in which there is a very clear statement of the respective positions of the rationalist and the pragmatist, is driven to include this in his position. Truth stands in a transcendental relation, and may in some cases make no empirical difference to us

1. J. of Phil., Vol. IV, 11.

whatever. It is merely agreement with reality, and reality is complete and ready-made from all eternity.

The pragmatist too accepts the definition that truth is agreement with reality, but he goes on to define what he means by reality and by such agreement, as we have already shown. He then challenges the rationalist to state what he means by the definition; but the rationalist refuses to explain it, the vaguer the better for him. Hence, the pragmatist claims that he and he only has offered a criterion of truth. The fallacy of the rationalist here as elsewhere has been to get an abstraction from the particulars of experience, and straightway confer upon such abstraction a transcendental significance which it does not merit. He denies the source and origin of the abstraction.

Professor James' illustration will make this clearer. Wealth, health, strength, truth, and such abstractions all come in the same class. We recognize at once that wealth is only a name for certain concrete processes in which the lives of some men are involved. It is <sup>?</sup>nothing in the man Rockefeller, <sup>?</sup>but not in us. So it is with health. It is merely a name for processes that go on, good digestion, etc. Strength too, is only a name for certain processes that go on, lifting heavy weights, etc. These terms have been abstracted from the particulars of experience, and they have no meaning beyond such particulars. It is exactly the same with truth. Truth is also an abstraction, a name for veri-

fication processes, for ideas that work. But the rationalist, true to his custom, deifies the abstraction and entirely forgets its origin. In fact he denies such origin.

The positions of the pragmatist and the rationalist respectively is very clearly brought out in Professor James' last letter to Mr. Russell. He says, "According to me, 'meaning' a certain object and 'agreeing' with it are abstract notions of both of which definite concrete accounts can be given. According to you they shine by their own inner light and no further account can be given. They may even 'obtain' (in cases where human verification is impossible) and make no empirical difference to us. To me, using the pragmatic method of testing concepts, this would mean that the word truth might on certain occasions have no meaning whatever. I still must hold to its having always a meaning, and continue to contend for that meaning being unfoldable and representable in experiential terms."<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the most important of the criticisms, and one which deserves the most careful consideration in order that a perfectly clear statement can be made. Just what do the pragmatists mean by 'practical', 'useful', etc.? We have shown that the critics were wrong in supposing that the pragmatic <sup>criterion</sup> could be taken in the ordinary narrow sense. It is true that truth does very often correspond to practical consequences in this narrow sense, but not al-

ways. There are plenty of exceptions. The fact that there does seem to be a correspondence in so many cases led the critics to suppose that this was the criterion proposed. But the pragmatists do not propose any such thing as a criterion of truth. They do, however, have an explanation for the fact. It is because these extremely practical consequences are more useful to us in everyday affairs. Hence we are more familiar with them. Other differences and consequences have exactly the same right to be recognized and considered, but they are not so relevant to our common ordinary purposes as the others are. We don't need them as badly as we do the extremely practical. Many truths have little value to us practically, in the narrow sense again. But the reason why most of our stock of truths are extremely practical is because the fields in which men search for truth are determined by their desires, their beliefs, etc., and oftener lead to very practical truth than otherwise.

We know that delusions have often been very useful, and have worked for the good of the subject. They have been used often as a means to social progress. There are many cases where a person does not want to know the truth. He courts ignorance, and turns his back on anything that looks like a search for truth.

If a woman's child had committed suicide, the woman, if she be like most of us, would rather not know the truth. She would prefer to be deceived and made to believe

that the death was caused by an accident. Such deception has often proved useful in keeping the subject from despair, morbid conditions, insanity, and perhaps death, when the truth about the situation would have brought about the above-mentioned conditions. The subject was not allowed the data by which to determine the truth concerning the situation, but the data were there. They were kept from her purposely, and she made no attempt at verification. There was undoubtedly a good accruing from her belief in a false idea, and the true idea would have worked evil, not good.

One more example might be given. A man is going to a theater to see a play. He learns through a friend that the play has been postponed on account of the illness of the leading actor. The result is that he spends the evening at home instead of at the theater as he had anticipated. On reading the paper the following morning he learns that the play has been given. During it the theater caught fire, and the result was disastrous. Many were killed in trying to escape, and scarcely anyone escaped without injury. Now this false idea which our man had was useful to him, because it kept him away from the theater and perhaps saved his life. The true idea would have been harmful.

We might continue to multiply instances, but these are enough to serve our purpose. It seems to me necessary for the pragmatist to define his criterion accurately, and to limit it so that these cases will not be included. And



I think it can be done, although the limit has been a little too hazy heretofore, to judge from the critics' attacks.

Here is the point to be considered. Long ago Plato represented Socrates as saying that if a thing is good, it must be good for something. Just so if a thing is useful, it is useful for some purpose, and in the problem of truth that purpose is primarily verification, or in other words systematization of our data. And as we have said before, it is not an individual affair. Truth is social, and one individual does not have all the data that it is possible for us to get, else he would be more than human and his knowledge would represent that abstraction the rationalist worships, the Truth with a capital T.

If a person limits his data, makes no attempt to get all the data he can, his conclusions cannot of course be considered as true. There is a great difference between the results of believing in an idea without making any attempts to verify it, i.e. limiting your data and neglecting to fit what you have into the idea to see whether it will work, and the results of believing in an idea in the scientific way, fitting your data into it to see whether they will work, making every effort to verify it, in short using it as an hypothesis. The first of these I shall call blind faith, and it has no place in the determination of truth and error. The second I shall call scientific faith, and it is the real test. The question is 'is it useful for veri-

fication?' as the term has been defined in the preceding section, not 'is it useful for some side issue?'

Professor James has been accused - and I think there is some ground for the accusation - of failing to make this distinction, or at least of failing to make it clear and definite. There are passages in his writings in which he seems to include consequences of the belief in an idea, or what I have called blind faith, in the criterion. He may not mean to do anything of the sort. Nevertheless the ambiguity is there, and there is opportunity for misunderstanding. The distinction between blind faith and scientific faith has not been clearly stated, and seemingly not adhered to in some cases. This is noticeable in the treatment of religious ideas.

For example in considering the question of design in nature Professor James says, "Pragmatically .... the abstract word 'design' is a blank cartridge. It carries no consequences, it does no execution. What design? and what designer? are the only serious questions, and the study of facts is the only way of getting even approximate answers."<sup>1</sup>

But he goes on to say, "Meanwhile, pending the slow answer from facts, anyone who insists that there is a designer and is sure he is a divine one, gets a certain pragmatic benefit from the term.... 'Design', worthless tho

it be as a mere rationalistic principle set above or behind things for our admiration, becomes, if our faith concretes it into something theistic, a term of promise. Returning with it into experience, we gain a more confiding outlook on the future."<sup>1</sup>

Now it seems to me that this latter statement refers directly to blind faith, the results of belief in a certain idea; and as such it cannot be considered a criterion of truth. In considering religious ideas especially should the distinction between blind and scientific faith be made clear, for it is here that men are least apt to test their conceptions. There is a very large number of men who accept their religious ideas ready-made. They never even inspect them, or stop to consider what they mean or whether there is any basis for their holding such ideas. Such cases are cases of blind faith, and the results may be, and indeed have been in many cases, good and extremely useful. But this is not a test of the truth of religious ideas. In the above cases religion is nothing more than a superstition, a blind prejudice, perhaps a delusion which in this case has good results. But religion is more than that, and we could never be satisfied with any such a treatment of it. Do not understand that I am criticizing religion, for such is far from my purpose. I have only shown that in this field

as in every other we must be on our guard to exclude from our criterion of truth those good consequences which are the result merely of the belief in certain conceptions, or in mere blind faith. By following this distinction between blind and scientific faith it will be possible, I think, to clear up the question as to what pragmatism means, and to state the criterion of truth so that it will be much more clearly understood.

Mr. Dewey's break with pragmatism as a movement was caused by this same vagueness concerning the meaning of 'practical' as used by the pragmatists. I refer the reader to his article, "What Does Pragmatism Mean by Practical",<sup>1</sup> in which he shows the need of a definite statement of what 'practical' as used means, discusses some points of difference between his position and that of Professor James, and ends by suggesting that his name be not connected with the movement of pragmatism, and that each man pursue his work in his own way and be responsible for it alone. I shall quote his closing paragraph:

"As for the thing pragmatism, moreover, Mr. James has performed so uniquely the composing of different elements into a single pictorial or artistic whole, that it is probable that progress in the immediate future will come from a more analytic clearing up and development of these

independent elements. It will then be possible to pass upon their differential traits, and the possibility of their consistent, logical combination. After a period of pools and mergers, the tendency is to return to the advantages of individual effort and responsibility. Possibly 'pragmatism' as a holding company for allied, yet separate interests and problems, might be dissolved and revert to its original constituents."<sup>1</sup>

To my mind there has been a change, a development in the pragmatic criterion. The pragmatists have been forced by the attacks of the critics to throw out mere utility as an element in the criterion of truth. There are numerous examples of passages written by the leaders, which can hardly be construed so as to mean anything other than usefulness or utility as a criterion. For example: "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons."<sup>1-</sup>

"What would be better for us to believe! This sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying 'what we ought to believe': and in that definition none of you would find any oddity."<sup>2</sup>

"An idea is 'true' so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives."<sup>3</sup>

1. J. of Phil., Vol. V, 4.
- 1-. Pragmatism, p76.
2. " p77.
3. " p75.

This indicates that the criterion was indefinite and vague, that its limits were not clearly defined. It would be interesting to trace in detail this development or evolution of pragmatism. This I have not attempted to do in any accurate way. I have only endeavored to give, in the first part a short historical sketch; in the second part a statement of the present status of pragmatism, i.e., a statement of what pragmatism is now, not what it was at its beginning or at the different stages of its development; and finally in this, the third part, a summary of the criticisms brought against it.

But Professor James denies that there has been any change in the pragmatic criterion. It certainly appears that there has been a change as one reviews the literature on the subject. All that can be said, however, is that even if there has been no change in pragmatism to the leaders themselves, there certainly has been a distinct development or evolution in the movement to those outsiders who were looking on, who did not get to view the inner workings, so to speak, but had to judge only from outward appearances. It is not worth while, however, to quibble over this point. What we are interested in is the finished product. What does pragmatism stand for now? And it is clear to everyone that mere utility will not serve as a criterion of truth.

So much for the criticisms that have been heaped upon pragmatism. In closing this section let us note again

that pragmatism does not stand for any particular results. As most 'isms' it must be general, and it proposes first, last, and all the time to be a theory of truth. As pragmatism, it has nothing to do with the special results that we may get from the application of the criterion. It does not claim that through such application men will invariably arrive at the same conclusions. It will not produce a universally accepted philosophy, but it will eliminate many of the controversies of the present time. Disagreements will result then as now; but there will be fewer of them, since men will have a clearer conception of what truth is and what is involved in their disagreement.

Much of the adverse criticism directed against Professor James is not criticism of pragmatism, but of his special application of it to certain fields, e.g. to religion. Now we can never hope that all men will agree concerning many questions at issue. Hence it would be folly to try to make the term pragmatism cover all the applications of it that men make to the many fields of inquiry, and no one but the critics have tried to do so. It would be equivalent to making it equal the whole system of philosophy of Professor James, plus that of Mr. Schiller, plus that of every other man who considers himself a pragmatist. This is absurd, and is merely another illustration of the result of the activity of the critic who doesn't know what he is criticizing. If Professor James has failed to distinguish



clearly between what pragmatism itself is and his applications of it to certain fields, it is high time that this be pointed out to the critics, for I am sure that he intends that there be a distinction. When this fact is thoroughly recognized, there will doubtless be more adherents and less opposition to the movement.

#### IV.

The last question that remains to be answered according to our pre-arranged plan is what are the permanent elements in pragmatism, what is to be the outcome of all this stir about truth that we have been experiencing in the philosophical world? First, there is no doubt about the fact that the movement has been of very great value to philosophy in creating a keen and live interest in the problem of truth, one of the most fundamental of philosophical problems. There has been much serious and valuable discussion by which the participants have become conscious of their own position, which had formerly been very hazy and vague. Others found it necessary to remodel their old views. Thus even though pragmatism has not succeeded in converting all thinkers to her way of thinking - and it would be incredible to expect such an occurrence - she has influenced all by bringing about a careful and critical consideration of the problem of truth.

Philosophy is not in an ideal condition at the

present time. It needs a cleaning up, and pragmatism thinks she can help in the process. There are too many metaphysical flights that go beyond all signs of human life and human experience. There seems to be no connection whatever. Now, philosophy, if it is to have any meaning for us whatever, must not be divorced from life. Hence, pragmatism revolts against such abstract systems which have no basis for their abstractions. She will stir up the thinkers who hold such views to a critical consideration of what it all means anyway. Thus she will make them more careful, and will perhaps influence them to root out some of the worst parts in their systems. Gradually then philosophy will become more exact and deserve a higher place. Now men of science look askance at it, merely because of the fact that it contains these systems that are divorced from life and have no meaning. But this condition, pragmatism insists, must be changed, gradually perhaps, but nevertheless changed. If you can't convert the radical rationalist, you can at least bring forces to bear upon him so that he will remodel his position to some extent, and cast out whatever is obviously irrelevant.

The future of pragmatism, now that it is becoming more clearly understood what it really is, appears very bright. Up to the present time the discussion has been almost entirely general in character, aiming at a statement of what pragmatism is; and it necessarily had to be so. As soon as this matter is cleared up, however, we may look for

a large amount of applied pragmatism. Indeed the movement has begun already. Our thinkers will apply it to certain definite problems. In its application it will become clearer what the proposed criterion is, and it is safe to predict that it will not be long until men will not be able to plead ignorance of what pragmatism means. Through use we shall become acquainted with it and see how it works in the different fields.

There are many now who are prejudiced against it, merely because they are not accustomed to it. They have been brought up on something different, and are loath to change. It is always so. Any new theory is first ridiculed and declared worthless and insignificant. Pragmatism has not escaped this. But in another generation, after this prejudice has passed away, and pragmatism has had an opportunity to show how it works on all sorts of problems, we may expect a reversal of the situation, in which importance and prestige will take the place of ridicule.

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